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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000506

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: KARABAKH IDP LEADER SURPRISINGLY CALM

REF: BAKU 468

Classified By: DCM DONALD LU, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: In a June 19 meeting with Pol-Econ Counselor and poloff, the newly designated leader of the Azeri Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) IDP community showed himself to be surprisingly calm and reasonable, in contrast to the somewhat uncouth figure he cut at the government-organized "Congress" that installed him (Reftel). Bayram Safarov, whose government position is head of the Shusha region's local government-in-exile, said little that would indicate that the Public Association of the IDP Community is anything other than a government-sponsored foil for the NK Armenian community. However, he somewhat surprisingly spared his guests the usual harangue and instead seemed if nothing else pleased to have the attention of a foreign embassy. End summary.

12. (SBU) Pol-Econ Counselor and poloff met the newly installed chairman of the "Public Association of the Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh," the current head of the exiled Shusha regional administration, Bayram Safarov, on June 19. (Note: Shusha, situated on a high ridge overlooking the NK Armenian capital of Stepanakert (Khankendi), was the largest Azeri-majority town in NK during the Soviet period. End Note.)

13. (SBU) Safarov said that the recent congress that installed him was part of a major overhaul of the previously moribund organization. The association will have 22 "voting" members, all very prominent citizens with roots in NK or the occupied territories. He also said that the organization's headquarters would relocate to a far better location in downtown Baku, as presently he is working from a truly decrepit Soviet-era apartment block that houses several of the occupied districts' local leaders.

14. (SBU) It was apparent from talking to Safarov that the GOAJ controls his organization, most notably because it has no alternative source of funding. When asked how his group is financed, Safarov vaguely explained that he gets donations from the IDP community, but did not attempt to explain how this is so given the poverty that is rampant among that group of people. Safarov said the organization has not begun to do so yet, but has plans to reach out to the embassies of the Minsk Group co-chair countries to highlight the issues affecting the IDP community.

15. (C) Comment: The noteworthy aspect of this meeting from our perspective was the absence of the obligatory harangue about the United States' "double standards" or "pro-Armenia tilt" that many Azerbaijani officials employ as a means of

introducing themselves. Rather, Safarov) while not shy about employing dubious facts, such as the number of IDPs in Azerbaijan) came across as basically reasonable. If he maintains this manner in public as the GOAJ considers raising the profile of its IDP community as a foil for the NK Armenians, he may yet prove to be an effective representative of Azerbaijani views.

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